

January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Mayor Redekop  
Town of Fort Erie  
1 Municipal Centre Drive  
Fore Erie, ON L2A 2S6

Dear Mayor Redekop,

Thank you for taking the time to discuss the planned 2028 closure of the Fort Erie Urgent Care Centre (UCC) with our Board of Directors on Tuesday, January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025. While the Niagara Health Board of Directors will be formally responding to the resolution you shared yesterday, I wanted to recognize and acknowledge our shared commitment to ensuring Fort Erie residents have access to primary care services.

I believe yesterday's engagement demonstrates progress on solutions that will actually improve healthcare for Fort Erie residents. The future of healthcare in Fort Erie lies in building the new, state-of-the-art South Niagara Hospital and in strengthening primary care, access to family doctors, nurse practitioners and their teams. Evidence shows team-based primary care is the most effective and comprehensive model for managing health.

As you noted in your presentation, currently, 33% of Fort Erie residents — nearly 12,000 people — do not have access to a family doctor. Strong primary care/access to a family doctor, nurse practitioner and other health care provider based on the needs of the community is the foundation of a healthy community, providing preventative care, chronic disease management and reducing the need for episodic treatment at walk-in clinics or Emergency Departments.

This week the Ontario government, with the leadership of Dr. Jane Philpott, committed significant funding to attach every Ontarian to a primary care provider over the next four years. The timing of this opportunity is ideal for the Town of Fort Erie to implement team-based primary care to meet the needs of residents when and where they need care.

As you know, Niagara Health has participated in numerous discussions with Fort Erie leaders and we want to continue these important conversations. We remain dedicated to finding meaningful ways to support Fort Erie's healthcare goals. Here are some of the steps Niagara Health has taken to support improved access to primary care in Fort Erie:

- Partnering with the Niagara Ontario Health Team to develop interdisciplinary care models;
- Supporting local physician recruitment efforts;
- Advocating for expanded diagnostic imaging services in Fort Erie; and
- Collaborating with local physicians to design a new primary care model tailored to community needs.

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When the South Niagara Hospital opens in 2028, Fort Erie residents will be just 25 minutes away from a state-of-the-art \$3.6-billion facility offering top-tier emergency and acute care services. This is much closer than the current, nearest hospital.

Our goal is to work collaboratively with the Town of Fort Erie to strengthen access to family physicians, nurse practitioners and primary care team-based services and ensure a smooth transition for the community, prior to the new South Niagara Hospital opening. We remain committed to open and transparent dialogue as we build a healthcare system that prioritizes access, quality and sustainability. As a demonstration of our commitment, we will reconsider our engagement with the Town of Fort Erie Health Services Committee.

Happy to discuss further at our meeting scheduled for February 6.

Sincerely,



Lynn Guerriero  
President and CEO  
Niagara Health

CC: Councillor George McDermott  
Councillor Nick Dubanow  
Councillor Joan Christensen  
Councillor Tom Lewis  
Regional Councillor Tom Insinna



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